

**PATENT**

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**AN APPARATUS FOR CONNECTING A  
LONGITUDINAL MEMBER TO A BONE PORTION**

**Technical Field**

5 The present invention relates to an apparatus  
which is used to retain bone portions, such as  
vertebrae of a spinal column, in a desired spatial  
relationship.

**Background of the Invention**

10 A known apparatus for retaining vertebrae of a  
spinal column in a desired spatial relationship is  
disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 6,280,442. U.S. Patent  
No. 6,280,442 discloses an apparatus including a  
longitudinal member extendable along the spinal column.  
A fastener engageable with a vertebra of the spinal  
15 column connects the longitudinal member to the  
vertebra. A housing has a first passage through which  
the longitudinal member extends and a second passage

with a longitudinal axis extending transverse to the first passage. The fastener extends through an opening in the housing into the second passage. The longitudinal axis of the fastener is positionable in  
5 any one of a plurality of angular positions relative to the longitudinal axis of the second passage.

A spacer received in the housing is engageable with the fastener and the longitudinal member. A clamping member threadably engages the housing to clamp  
10 the longitudinal member, the spacer, and the housing to the fastener to prevent movement of the fastener relative to the housing. When the longitudinal member is disengaged from the spacer, the housing may not remain in position relative to the fastener until the  
15 longitudinal member is clamped to the spacer. Accordingly, the housing must be held in position relative to the fastener by a surgeon while the longitudinal member is clamped to the spacer.

#### Summary of the Invention

20 The present invention is an apparatus which is used to retain bone portions in a desired spatial relationship. The apparatus includes a longitudinal member connectable with a bone portion. A fastener having a longitudinal axis is engageable with the bone

portion to connect the longitudinal member to the bone  
portion. A housing has a first passage configured to  
receive the longitudinal member. The housing has a  
second passage with a longitudinal axis extending  
5 transverse to the first passage. The fastener extends  
through an opening in the housing into the second  
passage and is movable relative to the housing. The  
longitudinal axis of the fastener is positionable in  
any one of a plurality of angular positions relative to  
10 the longitudinal axis of the second passage.

A spacer received in the second passage of the  
housing is engageable with the fastener and the  
longitudinal member. A member applies a force to  
prevent relative movement between the fastener and the  
15 housing when the longitudinal member is disengaged from  
the spacer and the spacer engages the fastener. The  
fastener and the housing are manually movable relative  
to each other against the force when the longitudinal  
member is disengaged from the spacer and the member  
20 applies the force. A clamping mechanism clamps the  
longitudinal member, the spacer, and the housing to the  
fastener to prevent movement of the fastener relative  
to the housing. Accordingly, the housing and the  
fastener can be positioned relative to each other and

the member will hold the fastener and the housing in the relative positions before the longitudinal member is connected to the housing.

**Brief Description of the Drawings**

5           The foregoing and other features of the present invention will become apparent to one skilled in the art to which the present invention relates upon consideration of the following description of the invention with reference to the accompanying drawings,  
10           wherein:

          Fig. 1 is a perspective view of an apparatus constructed in accordance with the present invention with portions removed for clarity;

          Fig. 2 is a sectional view of the apparatus of  
15           Fig. 1;

          Fig. 3 is a part sectional view of the apparatus of Fig. 1;

          Fig. 4 is an enlarged sectional view of a portion of the apparatus of Fig. 1;

20           Fig. 5 is a plan view of a spring member of the apparatus of Fig. 1; and

          Fig. 6 is a side view of the spring member.

Description of the Invention

The present invention is directed to an apparatus for retaining bone portions, such as vertebrae of a spinal column, in a desired spatial relationship.

5 Figs. 1-4 illustrate an apparatus 10 constructed according to the present invention. The apparatus 10 includes a surgically implantable longitudinal member or rod 12 for maintaining bone portions, such as vertebrae of a spinal column, in a desired spatial  
10 relationship. The member 12 is connected with vertebrae of the spinal column by fasteners 16.

The rod 12 is made of a suitable biocompatible material and has a length which is at least sufficient to enable the rod to span at least two vertebrae. Of  
15 course, the length of the rod 12 in any particular installation will depend upon the condition to be corrected and the number of vertebrae to be held in a desired spatial relationship relative to each other by the rod.

20 The rod 12 (Figs. 1-3) is connected to a respective vertebra by the fastener 16 made of a suitable biocompatible material. The fastener 16 has a longitudinal axis 18 and a threaded end portion 22 having a course thread convolution 24 which engages the

vertebra. A second end portion 26 of the fastener 16 is provided with a first part spherical surface 28. The second end portion 26 of the fastener 16 also includes a second part spherical surface 30 having a diameter less than a diameter of the first part spherical surface 28. A radially extending shoulder 31 extends between the part spherical surfaces 28 and 30. A recess 32 (Fig. 2) is provided on the end portion 26 of the fastener 16. The recess 32 receives a tool (not shown) that applies torque to the fastener 16 to turn the thread convolution 24 into the vertebra.

The fastener 16 (Figs. 1-4) extends into a housing 40 that interconnects the rod 12 and the fastener 16. The housing 40 (Fig. 2) has a first passage 42 through which the rod 12 extends. The housing 40 has a second passage 44 with a longitudinal axis 46 that extends transverse to the first passage 42. The fastener 16 extends through an opening 50 in the housing 40 and into the second passage 44. The first part spherical surface 28 of the fastener 16 engages a concave part spherical surface 52 of the housing 40. Accordingly, the fastener 16 is universally pivotable relative to the housing 40 so that the longitudinal axis 18 of the fastener 16 is

positionable in any one of a plurality of angular positions relative to the longitudinal axis 46 of the passage 44.

5 A spacer 60 is housed in the second passage 44 of the housing 40. The spacer 60 (Figs. 2-4) has a concave part spherical surface 62 that engages the part spherical surface 30 of the fastener 16. The shoulder 31 on the fastener 16 is engageable with the spacer 60 to limit the relative movement between the  
10 fastener and the housing 40. The spacer 60 also has a concave part cylindrical surface 64 that engages the rod 12. The spacer 60 has an opening 66 through which the tool (not shown) extends to engage the recess 32 in the fastener 16. The tool extends through the  
15 opening 66 to apply torque to the fastener 16 and connect the fastener to the vertebra.

The spacer 60 (Fig. 4) has a circumferential groove 68 for receiving a compressible member such as a spring member 70. The groove 68 is defined by an  
20 axially extending cylindrical surface 71. An upper surface 72 extends radially outward from the cylindrical surface 71. A lower surface 74 extends radially outward from the cylindrical surface 71 and generally parallel to the upper surface 72.

The housing 40 includes a circumferential groove 76 for receiving the spring member 70 so that the spring member extends from the groove 68 in the spacer 60 to the groove in the housing. The groove 76 is defined by an axially extending cylindrical surface 78. An upper surface 80 extends radially inward from the cylindrical surface 78. A lower surface 82 extends radially inward from the cylindrical surface 78 and generally parallel to the upper surface 80.

The spring member 70 (Figs. 5 and 6) is a ring having a gap 82. The gap 82 permits the spring member 70 to radially contract and expand. The spring member 70 has an arched shape, as viewed in Fig. 6, when the spring member 70 is disengaged from the spacer 60 and the housing 40. When the spring member 70 is received in the grooves 68 and 76 (Fig. 4), the spring member engages the lower surface 74 on the spacer 60 and the upper surface 80 on the housing 40.

The spring member 70 applies an axial force to the spacer 60 to prevent relative movement between the fastener 16 and the housing 40 when the rod 12 is disengaged from the spacer and the spacer engages the



fastener. The spring member 70 urges the spacer 60 axially toward the fastener 16 and the part spherical surface 52 of the housing 40 against the part spherical surface 28 of the fastener. The part spherical surface 62 of the spacer 60 frictionally engages the part spherical surface 30 of the fastener 16 and the part spherical surface 28 of the fastener frictionally engages the part spherical surface 52 of the housing 40. The fastener 16 and the housing 40 are manually movable relative to each other by a surgeon when the rod 12 is disengaged from the spacer 60 and the spring member 70 applies the axial force. The force applied by the spring member 70 may be overcome by the surgeon to move the housing 40 relative to the fastener 16. Accordingly, the housing 40 can be positioned relative to the fastener 16 and held in position relative to the fastener by the spring member 70 without the rod 12 engaging the spacer 60. It is contemplated that any compressible member could be used to apply the force to the fastener 16 to prevent relative movement between the fastener and the housing 40 when the rod 12 is disengaged from the spacer 60.

5       The spacer 60 has four axially extending slots 86,  
one of which is shown in Fig. 1. The slots 86  
intersect the groove 68. A tool (not shown) has four  
prongs that extend through the slots 86 and into  
engagement with the spring member 70. The tool grasps  
the spacer 60 and the spring member 70 for inserting  
the spacer and the spring member into the housing 40.  
The prongs of the tool engage the spring member 70 to  
radially contract the spring member into the groove 68  
10 in the spacer 60. The prongs hold the spring member 70  
in the radially contracted condition in the groove 68  
while the spacer 60 and spring member are being  
inserted into the housing 40. Once the spacer 60  
engages the fastener 16, the prongs are removed from  
15 the slots 86 and the spring member 70 radially expands  
into the groove 71 in the housing 40. Although the  
spacer 60 is described as having four slots 86, the  
spacer could have any number of slots and the tool  
would have the same number of prongs as the spacer has  
20 slots.

A clamping mechanism or set screw 90 (Figs. 1-4)  
threadably engages the housing 40. The set screw 90  
and the housing 40 have a German standard DIN513  
buttress thread. It is contemplated that the set

screw 90 and the housing 40 could have any desired thread formation. The set screw 90 engages and applies a force to the rod 12 to press the rod against the spacer 60 and the spacer against the fastener 16. The set screw 90 clamps the rod 12, the spacer 60, and the housing 40 to the fastener 16 to prevent movement of the fastener relative to the housing. The force applied by the set screw 90 cannot be overcome by the surgeon to move the housing 40 relative to the fastener 16.

The apparatus 10 is assembled by inserting the fastener 16 through the opening 50 in the housing 40 so that the part spherical surface 28 of the fastener engages the part spherical surface 52 of the housing. The spacer 60 and the spring member 70 are inserted into the housing 40 by radially compressing the spring member into the groove 68 in the spacer. The spacer 60 and the spring member 70 are inserted into the second passage 44 until the part spherical surface 62 of the spacer engages the part spherical surface 30 of the fastener 16. The spring member 70 is released and expands radially into the groove 76 in the housing 40.

A tool is inserted through the opening 66 in the spacer 60 and into the recess 32 in the fastener 16.

Torque is applied to the fastener 16 to turn the thread convolution 24 into the vertebra. Once the fastener 16 is connected with the vertebra, the housing 40 can be positioned relative to the fastener. The spring member 70 maintains the position of the housing 40 relative to the fastener 16 while the rod 12 is disengaged from the spacer 60. Once the housing 40 is positioned relative to the fastener 16, the rod 12 is placed into the passage 42 and in engagement with the spacer 60. The set screw 90 is threaded into the housing 40 and into engagement with the rod 12. The set screw 90 clamps the rod 12, the spacer 60, and the housing 40 to the fastener 16 to prevent movement of the fastener relative to the housing. Alternatively, the fastener 16 may be connected to the vertebra prior to the spacer 60 and the spring member 70 being inserted into the housing 40.

From the above description of the invention, those skilled in the art will perceive improvements, changes and modifications. Such improvements, changes and modifications within the skill of the art are intended to be covered by the appended claims.